

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 12021

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DEPT PLEASE REPEAT OTHER ADDRESSEES AS DESIRED

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR PFOR GR US

SUBJECT: US-GREEK BASE NEGOTIATIONS - RESUMPTION

REF: A. STATE 275341, B. ATHENS 11964

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH FINAL PARA, REF B., I SAW FORMIN
BITSIOS AT DINNER LAST NIGHT AND PRIVATELY CONVEYED TO HIM
THE PROPOSAL CONTAINED IN PARA ONE, REF A., NAMELY, THAT WE ARE
NOW PREPARED TO RESUME THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS, ARE READY TO DISCUSS
ALL OTUSTANDING ISSUES, AND WOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE THE NEGOTIATIONS
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I EXPLAINED TO BITSIOS THAT MY INSTRUCTIONS
TO MAKE THIS PROPOSAL, WHICH HAD JUST BEEN RECEIVED A SHORT TIME
BEFORE THE DINNER, WERE DISPATCHED FROM WASHINGTON BEFORE
THE DEPT HAD RECEIVED MY REPORT OF OUR OVERALL DISCUSSION OF
THIS SUBJECT EARLIER IN THE DAY (REF B). NONETHELESS,
I SAID, IT WAS CLEAR TO ME THAT THIS WAS A FIRM PROPOSAL
AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE BEEN MADE IN ANY CASE.
I WENT ON TO INDICATE THAT WE HAD NO STRONG, SPECIFIC PRE-
FERENCE AS TO THE STARTING DATE AND I FELT WE WOULD
SEEK TO ACCOMMODATE THE GREEK SIDE. I ALSO INDICATED THAT
I THOUGHT WE COULD ACCOMMODATE THE GREEK PREFERENCE BY FIELD-
ING A FULL TEAM ON THE US SIDE OR SOME SMALLER WORKING
GROUP OR TEAM IF THE GOG PREFERRED.

2. BITSIOS' FIRST REACTION WAS QUITE NEGATIVE. FOR A

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VARIETY OF REASONS, INDICATED IN MY REPORT OF OUR DISCUSSION

EARLIER IN THE DAY, HE SEEMED TO WANT ME TO WITHDRAW THE PROPOSAL, GIVING ME THE IMPRESSION HE DID NOT WANT HIMSELF OR THE GOG PLACED IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO REFUSE TO MEET WITH US ON THIS SUBJECT. HOWEVER, I INSISTED THAT THE PROPOSAL TO MEET AND RESUME THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS WAS A FIRM ONE THAT I HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO MAKE.

3. BITSIOS INQUIRED -- PERSONALLY, HE SAID -- WHY WE COULDN'T LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE. HE SAID THE GREEK SIDE WAS WILLING TO LET THE MATTER RIDE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND THAT THE SITUATION WITH GREECE WAS QUITE DIFFERENT THAN THE ONE WITH TURKEY, AND THAT FURTHERMORE, ALL OF OUR BASE AND MILITARY FACILITIES WERE OPERATIONAL IN GREECE AND HE COULD NOT SEE HOW WE WOULD BE HANDICAPPED IN THIS COUNTRY BY DEFERRING THE NEXT PHASE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. I STARTED TO GET INTO THE ANGLES CONCERNING THE TURKISH DCA AND CONGRESSIONAL ASPECTS BUT BITSIOS INTERRUPTED ME TO SAY, "ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, I WILL SPEAK TO THE PRIME MINISTER ABOUT IT DURING OUR TRIP." (BITSIOS AND CARAMANLIS ARE LEAVING TOMORROW MORNING FOR A WEEK OF TRAVEL TO BRUSSELS, PARIS AND VIENNA, RETURNING TO ATHENS NOVEMBER 18.) BITSIOS SAID HE WOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH ME SOON AFTER HIS RETURN TO LET ME KNOW THE GREEK GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE. I SHALL CONVEY THIS TO WASHINGTON AS SOON AS RECEIVED.

4. COMMENT: UNBEKNOWNST TO BITSIOS, I HAD ALSO EARLIER HAD A BRIEF OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS PRIVATELY WITH CARAMANLIS THE OUTLOOK FOR RESUMING THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS. CARAMANLIS WINCED WHEN I RAISED THE SUBJECT AND, MAKING SOME OF THE GENERAL POINTS BITSIOS HAD MADE TO ME EARLIER YESTERDAY, SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A BAD IDEA TO RESUME THE NEGOTIATIONS NOW. HOWEVER, HE ALSO INDICATED HE WOULD CONSULT FURTHER WITH BITSIOS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT BEFORE GIVING US THEIR CONSIDERED REPLY.

5. ALTHOUGH I OF COURSE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING AT THIS STAGE, MY OWN EXPECTATION IS THAT THEIR REPLY THE END OF NEXT WEEK WILL BE NEGATIVE. I DO NOT EXPECT THAT WHAT THEY MAY PERCEIVE AS A PROPOSAL FROM THE DEPARTMENTS
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OF STATE AND DEFENSE TO RESUME THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE PERSUASIVE ENOUGH FOR THEM TO ACCEPT -- GIVEN ALL THE OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN BOTH THE US AND GREECE IN RECENT DAYS. NOR WOULD I EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS BY A PRESENTATION THAT FINISHING UP THE NEGOTIATIONS NOW WAS VERY MUCH IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS. THEY HAVE HEARD THAT LINE OF REASONING MANY TIMES BEFORE AND, ALTHOUGH IT REMAINS VALID, I DO NOT BELIEVE THEY WOULD

SEE ANY GREAT DISADVANTAGE IN WAITING A COUPLE OF MONTHS.
NOR DO I BELIEVE THAT NEGATIVE AND POSSIBLY THREATENING
TURKISH REACTIONS WOULD MAKE THE GOG CHANGE ITS MIND --
PERHAPS BECAUSE, I SUSPECT, THEY MAY HAVE REACHED SOME
TACIT UNDERSTANDING WITH ANKARA TO COOL
THINGS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES FOR A TIME.

6. THEREFORE, IF IT IS CONSIDERED SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT
IN WASHINGTON, I WOULD SUGGEST THAT CONSIDERATION BE
GIVEN TO A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OR THE
SECRETARY TO CARAMANLIS, STRESSING THE NEED FOR RESUMING
AND CONCLUDING THESE NEGOTIATIONS. IF THE GREEK RESPONSE
THE END OF NEXT WEEK IS INDEED A NEGATIVE ONE -- WHICH I
THINK WE HAD BETTER BE PREPARED TO RECEIVE -- THEN IT MAY
BE THAT ONLY SUCH A STRONG, PERSONAL APPEAL AT THE HIGHEST
LEVEL WOULD HAVE ANY CHANCE OF TURNING THEM AROUND.
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